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FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4131  
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 3671  
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 2209  
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 1182  
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 0576  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 1876  
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 5851  
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 4145  
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 2027  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC  
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC

UNCLAS SANTIAGO 001098

SIPDIS

STATE FOR R/MR, I/PP, WHA/BSC, WHA/PDA, INR/IAA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [SNAR](#) [EFIN](#) [CI](#)  
SUBJECT: CHILE MEDIA REPORT -- DECEMBER 13-15

#### Lead Stories

1. All dailies highlighted the Christian Democrats (DC) proclaiming Eduardo Frei as their presidential candidate as well as the UDI endorsement of Sebastian Piera as the Alianza candidate in the 2009 electoral race. Other headlines highlighted concerns over the effect of declining copper prices on the country's mining sector.

#### U.S.-Related News

2. Embassy-organized fairs and contacts with the local private sector have yielded results for Chilean Ambassador in the United States, Mariano Fernandez, who has successfully resolved several problems and concluded negotiations over the entry of Chilean agricultural products. This earned him an article in The Washington Post, entitled, "A Diplomatic Champion for Chile" (El Mercurio, conservative, influential newspaper-of-record, circ. 129,000, 12/15).

3. Chilean Education Minister Monica Jimenez awarded Doris Atkinson a distinction for her decision to donate to Chile tons of unpublished material, personal letters, photographs, and memorabilia left by Chilean poet and Nobel Prize Gabriela Mistral. Atkinson is the official heir and manager of Mistral's work, which was located in the United States. The material arrived in Chile last December (Chilean government webpage, 12/11).

4. The sports section ran a paragraph on the Little League's final game of the season at the National Stadium, noting that the U.S. Embassy has sponsored the league for several years (Sun. La Tercera, 12/14).

5. Photo coverage of Ambassador Simons at the American Chilean Chamber of Commerce 90th anniversary event (Sat. La Tercera, 12/13).

6. Economist Sebastian Edwards wrote against bailout plans for the U.S. automobile industry: "Ford, General Motors, and Chrysler have been extremely arrogant. They are companies structurally inefficient and manufacture poor quality products that people do not want to buy. Theirs is a structural problem.... They had time to change and modernize, but did not. It makes no sense to help them if they are not truly committed to change.... The bankruptcy or fusion of the automobile industry would have a minor and limited effect, but Detroit is trying to show that it would be a catastrophe. That is not true. It is an exaggeration" (La Tercera,

conservative, independent, circ. 101,000, 12/13).

¶7. Weekly round-up column entitled, "Chance for Peace in the Middle East": "It has always been said that the United States is key to finding a solution in the Middle East. But Bush has been unable to find such a solution, as he said he would... probably because of the lack of a real desire to pressure all parties into striking a deal, which obviously calls for mutual concessions. Immersed in the 'war on terrorism' ... the U.S. government could hardly be perceived as the guarantor of a just agreement. Today, hopes are set on what the new Obama administration ... will propose to make the talks relevant again (El Mercurio, 12/15).

¶8. Column by defense journalist Raul Sohr entitled, "A Setback for Human Rights": "9/11 marked the beginning of the deterioration in civil liberties and fundamental (human) rights. The United States, which presented itself as a champion in this area until then, took a position that contradicted the spirit and text of the (Human Rights) Declaration. The most serious actions were the Guantanamo prison... and the Patriotic Act, whereby the United States legalized torture and authorized the CIA to kidnap individuals who were taken to secret detention centers.... Beyond the suffering of the victims, the most serious damage was that it buried the principle promoted thus far by the West -- that human rights are universal (La Nacion, government-owned, editorially independent, 12/14-12/20)

¶9. Editorial entitled, "Senate Seat for Sale": "The scandal revealed by the FBI ... is a strong blow to the reputation of U.S. democracy and especially to the Democratic Party.... The contrast between this scandal and the impeccable democratic process in the United States... is notorious and calls for a clarification of the incident itself and the appropriate sanctions for all those responsible (El Mercurio, 12/15).

¶10. Column by staff writer with the acronym MOJ: "Sold!": "Some things in life don't have a price, but others do, and it seems that a U.S. Senate seat is one of them.... The incident has splattered over the next President... who will have to prove that he is not part of this culture (of corruption). Because if the price for Obama's seat was one-million dollars... we can but wonder how much it 'costs' to become, let's say, a Secretary of State or of Defense, or Director of the CIA or the FBI.... It's strange that just as many are reviving the debate on the limits that between the government and the market, we might discover that they are not so far apart (Sat. La Tercera, 12/13).

¶11. The three largest copper mines in Chile are operating near their operational costs because of the sharp drop in the international price of copper, which closed at US\$1.35 per pound -- the lowest figure in four years. Among them is U.S. firm Freeport McMoran (Sat. El Mercurio, 12/13).

Local

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¶12. The DC party unanimously proclaimed Senator Eduardo Frei as its presidential candidate to run in the Concertacion's primary (El Mercurio, 12/15).

¶13. Jose Miguel Insulza endorsed the PPD's agenda, which includes the de-penalization of therapeutic abortion, nationalization of water, and opposition to nuclear energy. Insulza noted, however, he is open to studying the use of nuclear energy (Sat. La Tercera, 12/13).

¶14. Insulza said he would prefer the Concertacion to hold a primary to define its presidential candidate, rather than to do it through a political agreement among parties. Insulza's political agenda includes constitutional changes to substitute the current binominal voting system and to build a semi-presidential system. In foreign policy, he proposes to move from a trade-oriented approach to one that gives priority to resolving "struggles and desires of the colonialist past," promotes immigrant rights, and adopts a (policy) that is focused on Latin America" (Sun. El Mercurio, 12/14).

¶15. The UDI Party announces its decision to endorse RN Sebastian Piera as its presidential candidate for 2009 (Sat. El Mercurio, 12/13).

¶16. Column by Ascanio Cavallo: "A part of the (opposition) Alianza has believed for some time that (Eduardo) Frei is Sebastian Piera's true opponent... because the ideological differences between them is not much and voters closer to the right... could swing over and vote for Frei without feeling guilty (Sun. La Tercera, 12/14).

#### Chile and Other Countries

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¶17. The Latin American Conference of Interior Ministers begins today in Santiago. The goal of this conference is to come up with a plan of action to strengthen the operative capability of the Haitian police. To this end, Chile would be committed to extend full scholarships to train Haitian policemen (El Mercurio, 12/15).

¶18. President Bachelet will travel to Mercosur's semester meeting in Brazil. She will also meet with UNASUR representatives tomorrow to discuss the Pando Report. Meanwhile, the Montevideo press reports that Uruguay will withdraw from UNASUR if Argentina insists on proposing Nestor Kirchner as the entity's Executive Director (El Mercurio, 12/15).

¶19. Guatemala President Alvaro Colom is on an official visit in Chile to strengthen bilateral ties, with emphasis on energy and food (Sat. El Mercurio, 12/13).

SIMONS